Guilford County Animal Services

Foster Kitten Packet



Creation Date: March 23, 2021 (Author Kendelle Federico)

Revised: March 31, 2021 (Author Dr. Clarissa Noureddine, DVM, MS, MS and Kendelle Federico)



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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Guilford County Animal Services Foster Program! Our mission at Guilford County Animal Services (GCAS) is to help our county be a safe, compassionate, and healthy place for people and animals. We work to control the loose animal population, as well as increase the positive outcomes for homeless animals in the county. GCAS is the only open admission shelter in Guilford County. As we expand our life-saving programs, working collaboratively is more crucial than ever, both in the shelter and outside of our front doors.

Important Procedures for Foster Parents

The Foster Coordinator can be reached Tuesday-Saturday from 8 AM to 5 PM. Please contact the front desk at (336) 641-3401 on Sundays and Mondays from 8 AM to 5 PM. If an emergency arises after hours, please contact Happy Tails Emergency Veterinary Clinic or Carolina Veterinary Specialists. If you have a concern about a nonurgent issue after hours, please contact the appropriate number at 8 AM the following day. If an emergency should arise during our regular business hours, please call the foster coordinator during designated hours or the front desk.

Happy Tails Emergency Veterinary Clinic: (336) 288-2688

2936 Battleground Ave | Greensboro, NC 27408

Carolina Veterinary Specialists (336) 632-0605

501 Nicholas Rd | Greensboro, NC 27409

If you need to go Happy Tails or Carolina Veterinary Specialists, please bring your foster paperwork with you and tell the staff you are a foster family for GCAS. GCAS will cover all medical expenses if an emergency occurs. Once an animal is taken to an emergency clinic, staff will notify you if the animal is stable after examination and can return home.



Foster Supplies

GCAS will provide the following:

- A cat carrier for transport
- Litter pans that can be easily sanitized
- Litter
- Kitten food (both canned and dry, depending on age)
- Kitten milk replacement (KMR) or kitten formula
- Syringes or bottles for young bottlefeeding kittens
- Veterinary care
- Donated foster supplies as they come in

You will provide:

- Fresh water
- Warming devices that do not automatically shut off, Snuggle Safe discs recommended (for very young kittens without mom or single kittens)
- Non-plastic food/water bowls that can be easily sanitized
- A separate area to keep the foster kittens away from other pets
- Toys
- Plush bedding that cannot fray, i.e. fleece

How to Care for a Mother and Kittens

Fostering mothers with kittens can be very different from fostering orphaned kittens. The mother will do most of the work for you! Your job as a foster is to provide a calm environment where mom and kittens feel safe and secure. It is VERY important that these families are kept in a room of their own without interference from family pets — another animal just sniffing through the door can be extremely stressful for a mother who is trying to protect her babies.

The Setup

A large portable, foldable playpen is a great place to house litters with mom. The bottom of a pen should be lined with plenty of bedding to make great nesting box. Food (wet and dry) should always be available for the mother. The kittens will be nursing from the mother until starting the weaning process at 4-5 weeks old. Refer to the "How to Feed Kittens at Different Ages" section for additional information about feeding. Fresh water should be provided for the mother in an area inaccessible to the kittens until they are at least 4 to 5 weeks old to prevent them from falling into the bowl and drowning.

Introducing to the Home

Initially, the mother should be left alone with her babies for the first day or two. Adult cats often take longer to settle into a new environment, and she will need time to come out of



hiding and explore without you there. Once she is more settled you can spend increasing amounts of time in the room but let her seek attention from you on her own terms. Do not approach a mother cat as she may become protective of her kittens. Allow her to begin each interaction and stop petting her at the first sign of discomfort (swishing tail, hissing, growling, tensing up, or moving away).

Playtime

As the mother becomes more comfortable and as the kittens get older, make sure to spend time with the mother separately from the kittens – even mom cats like to play! Have a place where mom can get away from her babies if she needs a break.

How to Feed Kittens at Different Ages

Always wash your hands before and after handling the kittens! Make sure that food/water bowels are cleaned daily.

We ask that you weigh your kitten(s) each day at the same time to keep track of any gains or losses. Ideally, kittens should gain 0.25–0.5oz per day. If your kitten is not eating for 24 hours or is losing weight, please contact our foster team immediately.

kitten weight and feeding chart

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT PER FEEDING	SCHEDULE
0-1 week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 weeks	150-250 grams	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	350-450 grams	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 weeks	550-850 grams	(weaning; offer ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

Source: Kittenlady.org

Orphaned Bottle Babies (Newborn- 4 weeks)

Clean the bottles by washing in warm soapy water and rinsing in hot water.
 Prepare formula as directed on package. Cut a small hole in the nipple. When turned upside down, the formula should barely drip out of the nipple. The formula should be body-temperature warm; test the temperature on the inside of your wrist before feeding. KMR formula is made with 1-part powdered



formula to 2-parts water. Refer to "Kitten Weight and Feeding Chart" for approximate feeding amounts. It is acceptable if individual kittens vary slightly from the recommended feeding amounts. Make sure the kitten is lying on its stomach in a natural position to feed. Do not hold kittens on their backs like human babies or squeeze the bottle while feeding—this can cause kittens to aspirate the milk, choke and/or catch pneumonia. You may have to give the kitten a couple of minutes to get used to the nipple or syringe. Hold the bottle at a 45-degree angle to prevent air from entering the kitten's stomach. If you see formula come out of the kitten's nose, stop feeding immediately and let the kitten clear the formula. If you hear crackling sounds when the kitten breathes, or believe it may have aspirated formula, contact the foster coordinator immediately. Do not feed milk not specified for kittens, nor overfeed. This will cause medical issues!

- Newly weaned/Learning to wean kittens (4-5 weeks old)
 - When first starting to wean kittens, add canned kitten food to the bottle formula and blend well to prevent clogging the nipple. If they are not yet interested in whole canned food on a plate, they should be offered "kitten slurry". This consists of warm water, kitten milk replacement, and canned kitten food that is stirred into a soup consistency. You can adjust the ingredients as needed to make sure they are eating. If they are not eating entire meals of the slurry, supplementing with the bottle is necessary to ensure the kittens are eating full meals. Once the kittens have teeth, care should be taken to ensure they do not bite or chew on nipple. Swallowing any small piece is a choking hazard and could put them at risk for intestinal blockage. Kittens that have just been weaned will need to be offered fresh canned kitten food 2-3 times a day. They will be very messy eaters so please keep them clean by wiping them with a warm wet cloth. Fresh water should always be available.
- Fully weaned kittens (5 weeks and older)
 - At 5 weeks old they should be offered dry kitten food with the canned food. You
 can help their interest in this by mixing some canned with dry, then slowly
 decrease the amount of canned food you add. Fresh water should always be
 available.



Stimulation

A newborn kitten cannot evacuate its bowel or bladder on its own. After feeding, gently massage and stimulate the ano-genital area with a sterile cotton ball, wipe, or clean cloth dipped in warm water. You will need to do this after every feeding until the kitten begins to use the litter box. They should defecate at least once per day and urinate each time. (Refer to General Health Care page)

They should be able to start using a litter box at about 4 weeks old. You may need to start off with a shallow foil pan if a regular litter box is too high for them to climb in and out of. Use Yesterday's News, pine litter, or shredded paper.

Keeping a Warm Environment

The area where you keep the kittens should be warm, dry, and clean with fresh blankets. A warming device should ALWAYS be on the lowest setting. Anything higher may overheat the kittens or severely burn them. Wrap both the electrical cord (if applicable) and warming device with a towel. They should NEVER be placed directly on a warming device as this could cause severe burns. Check to see if your warming device automatically shuts off or stays on 24/7. Please exercise extreme caution when using a device that does not shut off. If it does shut off, you must be vigilant in rewarming the device on a consistent schedule. We recommend microwaveable SnuggleSafe discs as a safe option. Follow the warming instructions on the disc packaging. The kittens should have room to move off the warming device if they become too hot. The first 2 weeks are especially critical to keeping the kittens warm. Kittens with mothers should not need a warming device unless the mother is not attentive to them.

- Nestbox Temperature
 - Newborn-1 week old- 85-90 F
 - 1-2 weeks old- 80-85 F
 - 2-3 weeks old-75-80 F
 - 3 weeks and older- 70-75 F



Keeping Your Foster Healthy

Clean the room/area thoroughly every 5-7 days or as needed. Phenol-based products are known to be toxic to cats and should not be used. If unsure about a product, a good rule of thumb is to avoid if the name contains "sol". Wash litter boxes, clean walls and floors near the litter boxes, and wash all bedding and toys with bleach. Wear gloves and wash your hands to prevent spread of disease!

Symptoms of an emergency may include:

- Fever (102.5 or above, rectally)
- Respiratory distress (choking, wheezing, open mouth breathing, shortness of breath)
- Green secretions and/or bad odor from nasal area
- Not eating or drinking for more than one day
- Extreme lethargy
- Continual vomiting or occasional vomiting that lasts more than a day
- Obvious distress, and/or pain or pronounced behavior changes

For kittens less than 2-3 weeks, open mouth breathing, not nursing or taking the bottle, and crawling away from the litter/mother are often signs of something more serious going on.

Call the animal shelter or foster coordinator if you see:

Upper Respiratory Infections

Sneezing, congestion, nasal and/or eye discharge are common signs of URIs in cats. Often, cats with URIs will have a harder time smelling food. Tempting your foster cat with smelly canned cat food, Hills a/d food (can be requested from GCAS), or Gerber baby food (chicken or other meat protein ONLY) can encourage them to start eating. You can also warm the food in the microwave for 5-10 seconds to help "bring out" the smell of the food. Make sure the food is evenly heated and not too hot before giving to the kitten to prevent your kitten from getting burned. You may have to coax them to eat by using your fingers, and even smearing it on their lips or nose. If your foster cat is refusing food, call the foster coordinator to schedule an appointment. Steam from a humidifier or hot shower often helps clear the nasal passages. Keep the nose and eyes clear of discharge with warm, damp cotton balls.

Hypoglycemia

A kitten with hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) will lack energy. Kittens need glucose to function normally, as it is the fuel the body burns for energy. Common signs of hypoglycemia include



sluggish behavior and/or no interest in moving or eating and lethargy. In severe instances, kittens may have seizures, since glucose is necessary for the brain tissue and muscles to function. These hypoglycemic episodes will cause kittens to fall over and appear weak or comatose. Hypoglycemia is an emergency; therefore, you will need to contact the foster coordinator and bring them to see a vet immediately or take them to an emergency vet if it's after hours. You may rub Karo Syrup on their gums or honey while you are on the way to see a vet to boost their glucose level.

Dehydration

Watch carefully to see if your foster cat is drinking water. You may have to monitor the level of the water bowl and keep track of litter box activity. To check for dehydration, pull the skin up over the shoulder blades. If it slides back quickly, the cat is not dehydrated. If the skin goes down slowly, or does not lie flat again, then the cat is dehydrated and needs fluids. You can also examine the cat's gums. If they are dry and tacky (instead of moist) this could indicate dehydration. Call the foster coordinator immediately if you suspect your foster is dehydrated.

Intestinal Parasites

Kittens need to be dewormed starting at 2 weeks of age and repeated every 2 weeks until able to take monthly preventative. This will be scheduled through the shelter. After worming, it is normal to see worms pass in the stool. If you see white, rice-like segments, please notify the foster coordinator, as they most likely have tapeworms and will need a different type of dewormer. For more information regarding parasites, visit https://capcvet.org/guidelines/.

Panleukopenia

This is a very contagious and potentially fatal disease caused by the feline parvovirus. The feline parvovirus infects and kills cells that are rapidly growing and dividing, such as those in the bone marrow, intestines, and the developing fetus. Symptoms to look for are lethargy, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea and/or blood in the stool. If you see any of these symptoms call us immediately.

Other issues such as:

- Loose stool or diarrhea
- Eyes that are red and inflamed or have an extreme amount of discharge and swelling, vs. small amounts of discharge, usually in both eyes (common with a URI). This can often be treated with eye ointment picked up at the shelter.



- Any crumbly wax-like substance in the ears (possible ear mites). Ear mite medicine can be picked up at the shelter.
- Fleas or flea dirt (black pepper-like substance in the fur). Flea preventative is usually applied if fleas are noticed at the shelter. If you see flea dirt, we will find out if flea preventative was already applied. Occasional baths with Dawn dish soap or baby shampoo and a flea comb will suffice to get rid of fleas on a very young kitten. Do not use a flea shampoo or other product without asking the shelter first.
- Failure to thrive: Sometimes kittens that are very young will take a turn for the worse and die quickly with no warning. If you have a foster that dies, please call us and we will have you bring that kitten in to be examined by the medical team to determine if there is a risk to your other kittens.
- Allergies: Cats can have allergic reactions to medications. If a sudden, adverse reaction
 happens after giving a new medication, such as wheezing or eyes being more inflamed,
 stop the medication and call the foster coordinator.

Socialization

The ideal time for socializing kittens is from 2 to 7 weeks of age. As soon as their eyes and ears are opening, socialization opportunities begin. Cats and kittens are individuals, and each will respond differently to socializing techniques. Raising littermates together will help them learn how to be a cat, gain a social identity, and will help them tolerate future feline companions. Friendly and outgoing kittens can be snuggled and played with easily once they are settled into your home. Invite friends and family over to play with them! This will introduce new people and smells to their environment. Get them used to different sounds, such as the doorbell, vacuum, tv, pots, pans, and alarms. Please DO NOT take your foster outdoors- no exceptions!

Tips for An Under-socialized, Fearful Kitten

Socialization after 2 to 7 weeks old is still possible but is increasingly difficult, especially after 12 to 14 weeks old. Avoid making prolonged eye contact with a fearful kitten. Practice the "slow blink" (blinking once over a period of 3 to 5 seconds) when a kitten makes eye contact with you. When fearful or stimulated, a cat's eye will dilate. Keep the kitten in a room with a few places they can hide where you can easily get to if needed. Make frequent visits to the room and sit with them to help them get used to your presence. You may also want to try using a stick or dowel with feathers attached to one end, to provide visual stimulation and distraction. A



second stick or dowel with a soft fabric on it can be used to lightly touch and pet the kitten. As the kitten gets comfortable with your presence, try moving closer each time. Do this when the kitten eats, progressing to being able to hand feed and later to touching kitten. At this point, when you can touch them, use a finger to make small 1½-inch clockwise circles all around kitty's shoulders, head and upper back. Make the circles small and quick and leave the body after each time.

Showcasing Your Foster

A "Foster Biography" for each animal is a great way to help potential adopters learn about their likes, dislikes, and personality! Send the foster coordinator cute photos that highlight their appearance and personality as well. If the cat has some bad habits, this can be discussed over the phone with any potential adopters. The web story should generate interest, not turn people away. We don't want to mislead people; however, we really try to focus on the positive. Please email the story to the foster coordinator!

Adoptions

Kittens *MUST* be 8 weeks or older and weigh at least 2 pounds (so they can be spayed or neutered) to be qualified for the adoption floor. When your foster is ready for adoption, friends, co-workers and relatives may want to adopt. We encourage you find potential adopters for your foster and notify the foster coordinator when you do. Generally, foster families will be the first to be eligible to adopt any foster animal. If you want to adopt your foster this must be made clear to the foster coordinator before the animal is marketed to others for adoption.

We may also have you contact and set up meet and greets with potential adopters that contact us directly about your foster. If they decide to adopt, you can schedule a time to meet here, where they can fill out the paperwork, pay the fees, and adopt the animal. They must have the animal ID number in order to complete the adoption. If you are unsure of the animal ID, contact the foster coordinator. If there are no potential adopters, fosters need to come back to the shelter for our adoption floor when they are 8 weeks old. Please contact the foster coordinator to set up an appointment to bring them back.



Important Contacts

Guilford County Animal Shelter

(336) 641-3401 4525 West Wendover Ave Greensboro, NC 27409

Foster Coordinator

Kendelle Federico (336) 266-4138 (Available Tuesday- Saturday 8-5 PM) kfederico@guilfordcountync.gov

Happy Tails Emergency Veterinary Clinic

(336) 288-2688 2936 Battleground Ave Greensboro, NC 27408

Carolina Veterinary Specialists

(336) 632-0605 501 Nicholas Rd Greensboro, NC 27409

For Animal Control emergencies, questions or comments, call (336) 641-5990.

If you need to return your foster pet due to an emergency that is after-hours, you may first attempt to contact the foster coordinator. If you are unable to reach the foster coordinator and the situation is urgent, please contact Animal Control Dispatch (336-641-5990). If Dispatch is unavailable, you can try calling Metro 911 non-emergency number (336-373-2222). For true emergencies, call 911.

Visit our Trello Board for Additional Kitten and Mother/Litter Resources and How-To Videos and to get in touch with Feline Foster Mentors

https://trello.com/b/jkXzH3aR

KITTEN DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES			
Age	Weight	Milestones	
		Eyes and ears are closed.	
	3–3.7 ounces	Sleep 90% of the time.	
Birth	90–100 grams	Minimal handling.	
2 – 3 days		Umbilical cord falls off.	
4 days		Begins to purr.	
		Eyes and ears should be open.	
10 – 14 days	8 ounces 227 grams	Healthy kittens will be round and warm with pink skin and will rarely cry.	
		Deciduous incisors erupt, can begin to eliminate without help.	
		Will start crawling, standing, and playing with littermates.	
	12 ounces	Begin regular handling.	
2 – 3 weeks	340 grams	Ready for deworming.	
		Deciduous canines erupt, beginning to walk but do not have great balance, will start to groom themselves, able to thermoregulate.	
		Continue daily handling.	
	1 pound	Ready for their 1st vaccine.	
4 weeks	454 grams	Ready for gruel and may be ready for introduction of dry kitten food.	
		Deciduous premolars erupt.	
	1.5 pounds	Running, playing, using the litterbox, grooming themselves.	
6 weeks	680 grams	Should be eating dry kitten food, supplemented with canned.	
	2 pounds		
8 weeks	907 grams	Ready for surgery and adoption.	

Courtesy of: University of WI Shelter Medicine Program